Peltenburg E. (with contributions) 2015. *Tell Jerablus Tahtani, Syria, I. Mortuary Practices at an Early Bronze Age Fort on the Euphrates River*. Oxford: Oxbow Books and CBRL (Levant Supplementary Series 17)

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more specifically on the mobility and exchange of animals and animal products such as isotope and DNA analysis.

A contribution by B. Mater and H. Turoğlu is dedicated to an overview of the Holocene geomorphology of Anatolia. It embraces a very vast subject within few pages and the impression is that of dispersion and a rather tenuous link to the real subject matter of the book. Several of the maps illustrating this chapter are also either of too bad quality or too small to be useful. The chapter on grinding stones by I. Pavlu is also short and quite general in scope. Finally, the editor of the volume, C. Wawruschka, contributes with a chapter on spatial approaches to subsistence strategies and exchange. After an introduction on land use and site catchment analysis, it consists essentially of a case study concerning the spatial analysis of Middle Chalcolithic sites in the Aksaray-Nevsehir-Nigde region of Northwestern Cappadocia. The conclusions do not quite live up to the expectations and it is clear that more data is needed to apprehend more precisely the spatial relationship between the sites.

The general impression of the volume is that of a rather heterogeneous collection of papers even though they all deal with Anatolia. Some seem more mature than others and not all relate very clearly to the theme of subsistence practices and exchange. The choice of disciplines to illustrate especially the second issue does not seem entirely convincing and several of the authors conclude more or less that their data is not appropriate for showing the movement of goods. This is particularly the case for the bioarchaeological disciplines, archaeobotany and zooarchaeology, that have inherent difficulties to reveal the exchange or trade of animals and plants between different communities. Nevertheless, the question had to be asked and the answers are generally articulate and well formulated. As a whole, the volume contains a large quantity of information on past Anatolian subsistence economies as well as more theoretical contributions and the diversity of approaches is stimulating for the open-minded reader.

The transcription of the discussions that followed the presentations is useful as is also the extensive bibliography that concludes the volume.

PELTENBURG E. (with contributions) 2015. *Tell Jerablus Tahtani, Syria, I. Mortuary Practices at an Early Bronze Age Fort on the Euphrates River.* Oxford: Oxbow Books and CBRL (*Levant Supplementary Series* 17). 392 p. By M. BOUSO[1]

Not surprisingly the variety and the complexity of the burial record from the Middle Euphrates Valley during the Early Bronze Age (henceforth EBA) have attracted considerable scholarly attention. As a result of this interest, we rely on a range of publications and PhD dissertations from different perspectives. Controversially, due to preliminary and partial publication of the results from many sites, there has been no attempt at a comprehensive account of all that this record involves.

For a more holistic picture of the funerary practices performed during this period, in this region, and to discuss further questions of social memory, complexity, identity and post-funerary rituals, we need to have all the data set in context. For this reason, the volume under review is a welcome and exciting addition to the development of the archaeology of the Euphrates valley, its landscapes and mortuary remains.

Interest in the burial customs of the Middle Euphrates Valley began in the early 20th century, with the discovery of several tombs in the acropolis of Carchemish by British excavations (Woolley and Barnett 1952). At the same time, the construction of the railway to Baghdad brought to light more graves, while numerous clandestine excavations that provided grave goods, mainly ceramics, began to proliferate. This fact led C.L. Woolley and T.E. Lawrence to complement their excavations at Carchemish with a campaign to recover material taken from the tombs, trying to document their place of origin. These researchers managed to register a series of necropolises along the Euphrates Valley, such as Amarna (Woolley 1914). As the authors of the volume have pointed out, many of these sites had been excavated as part of the rescue excavations generated by the construction of the Tishrin Dam in Syria in the nineties of the previous century (p. 144). The funerary offerings that were recovered ended up in museums in Britain and formed what is known as Woolley-Lawrence collection; a study of metal items from this collection, preserved in the Ashmolean Museum, is presented in the book.

Archaeological interest in this area emerged again from the decade of the seventies of the last century, following

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archaeological heritage rescue projects. Regarding the book under review, we focus our attention on the area of Carchemish where Jerablus Tahtani is located. In fact, the excavations began as a response to the construction of the above mentioned Tishrin dam in Northern Syria. The dam was completed in 1999. Fortunately, not all the sites were flooded, for instance, Jerablus. This area has been the subject of unprecedented archaeological interest motivated by the construction of two more dams, at Carchemish and Birecik in Southeast Turkey. And recently, a Turco-Italian expedition has resumed the excavations at Carchemish. Some of the Tishrin dam sites have brought to light important funerary remains dated to the EBA, but few sites have been systematically or completely published.[2] Notable exceptions are the monographs on Qara Quzaq (Del Olmo 1994; Del Olmo *et al*. 2001; Matilla *et al*. 2012) and Shiukh Fawqani (Bachelot and Fales 2005). However, for Amarna there is only the publication of results for the Halaf period (Tunca et Molist 2004).

Consequently, we should celebrate the publication of this first monograph on previous excavations conducted at the site of Jerablus Tahtani.[3] A considerable part of the book is devoted to publishing the results of the EBA graves. Jerablus is located only 5 km south of Carchemish and lies on the right bank of the Euphrates, immediately opposite Shiukh Fawqani (both sites were occupied during the Uruk and EBA periods). The site was investigated between 1992 and 2004 by a team from Edinburgh University under the leadership of Edgar Peltenburg, the editor of the volume, who sadly, passed away last summer.

The site provides evidence from Late Chalcolithic (LC3) (3900-3750 BC) to the Islamic period (700-1250 AD), but not continuously. The main occupation periods were the Late Uruk and the EBA; after a hiatus, Iron Age, Hellenistic, Byzantine and Islamic levels have been found, the latter including burials. The book focuses on the graves that belong to the EBA, especially to the later levels of this period (Period II, when the construction of a fort marks the division into periods IIA and IIB) and, in particular, on tomb T.302, which is presented in detail and discussed.

One of the main interests of the site is the presence of intramural burials, *i.e.* burials inside the site as distinct from extramural burials (in a graveyard some distance from the settlement). This fact is relevant because the main graves recorded for this period and this area are extramural. Few sites provide both types, and unfortunately, for sites with intramural burials it has not always been possible to determine their exact context (below the floors of habitations, in abandoned areas, etc.). An example is the stone-built corbelled chamber tomb from Tilbeshar, which shares many features with T.302 (Kepinski 2010: 308). Consequently, unless we establish their location correctly, it is not possible to progress with the interpretation and meaning of these burials. It is vital to bear in mind that intramural burials do not automatically indicate that the site was occupied. In particular, we must be aware that the graves could have been introduced once the site was abandoned. As far as the Jerablus burials are concerned, those located outside the fort walls (17 graves) have been considered as extramural in order to distinguish them from those placed inside (44 graves). As for the intramural graves, the evidence points to three scenarios for burials: just before and while the buildings were inhabited, when the area was abandoned, and shortly afterwards.

The book is divided into thirteen chapters, among which the introduction and summary explain the importance of this research project. Regrettably, this volume could not include complete reports on ceramics from the graves, which are still being studied, or on the habitation levels (forthcoming in a second volume). Consequently, although the authors are to be commended for their fine efforts describing the graves and their contents, the lack of thorough pottery analysis and of a comprehensive explanation of the levels where the graves were found make it difficult to understand the burial record correctly. In addition, the fact that the areas are isolated (a direct consequence of the salvage excavation), a problem that is compounded by physical disturbance, makes it very difficult to get a wider picture of the different levels of the EBA period and the possible function of these areas until the second volume appears. In fact, the impression one gains from reading the book is that it represents a first instalment of a lengthier path of research.

The book follows the classical approach of treating the funerary data separately. In addition to human remains, objects, as well as the architecture of the graves are discussed in separate sections, and it is not until the final chapter that all the information is discussed together. Furthermore, the insistent focus on the elite burial T.302 rather than on the graves of ordinary people goes against the new directions that Near Eastern bioarchaeology is taking. These new trends in funerary theory advocate a more holistic interpretation of data, *i.e.* attempts to integrate bioarchaeological data with context

2. The aim of a conference held in Barcelona in 1998 was to collect together the main results of these rescue excavations (Del Olmo Lete and Montero Fenollós 1999).

3. Preliminary reports on the site's excavations were published in *Orient Express* (1994, 1995 and 1996) and *Levant* (27, 1995; 28, 1996; 29, 1997 and 32, 2000) journals. In addition, some important issues had already been discussed in Peltenburg 1999; 2007 and 2007-2008.

(artefactual evidence, site stratigraphy and so on) (Porter and Boutin 2014: 3).

The "Introduction", by E. Peltenburg, briefly sets out nine themes, amongst them: a presentation of the site and of the Jerablus plain, the background and previous investigation of the site, and the aims and methods of this excavation. In Chapter 2, "The regional setting of Jerablus Tahtani", T.J. Wilkinson provides an interesting overview of results from their study of the site with a regional survey of its territories as part of the "Land of Carchemish Project (2006-2010)", paying particular attention to the EBA. He argues that evidence from the field and the excavations in Jerablus provide a picture of a small, nucleated community during this period (p. 18). In the second part of the chapter, K. Deckers deals with the reconstruction of the landscape through analysis of charcoal evidence from the site.

Chapter 3, "Chronology", summarises the development of the occupation sequence documented at the site which comprises five main periods, all related to the general chronology of the area (E. Peltenburg). Regarding the 3rd millennium, the volume refers to the new periodisation proposed by the ARCANE group project, which divides the millennium into six phases (Early Middle Euphrates – EME 1-6) (Finkbeiner *et al.* 2015). The chapter includes a discussion of 28 radiocarbon dates (D. Hamilton).

In the fourth chapter, "The mortuary facilities and their contents", the authors (E. Peltenburg, D. Bolger, S. Campbell *et al.*) provide a detailed description and a catalogue of the graves and their finds. As stated at the outset of this review, in all 70 graves are described: one belongs to Uruk period, three to the Iron Age, and the rest to the EBA. Of this remainder, only one belongs to Period IIA and the rest are from Period IIB. Nevertheless, the chapter is predominantly concerned with the monumental stone-built tomb T.302 (dated approximately to EME 3-4).

Significantly, most graves, especially pits, had been seriously affected by disturbance or were only partly excavated as they lie outside the boundary of the excavation. Other problems that had to be dealt with were surface erosion, many tombs were cut into by later graves or structures, unstratified graves, the reduced size of the sondage trenches, and so on. As far as the human remains are concerned, the discrepancies between the osteological and the dentition assessment in age and the assignment of individuals to age groups led to confusion and prevent us from knowing exactly the number of individuals buried in a grave, their gender and whether they were secondary burials. Despite these circumstances, considerable efforts were made by the authors to ensure a detailed description of the mortuary facilities.

The authors have provided the general positions of the graves. Although a map of the location of some graves mentioned in the text is given, it would have benefited from more relevant contextual information about the levels in which the tombs were found, taking into account that, as so often, the stratigraphy between levels and graves is very difficult to determine. Setting plans of tombs and sections of the levels side by side would have allowed the reader a more nuanced picture of the nature of the burials, especially in those cases where several graves were found under one room.

Six types of funerary structure have been identified: sherd,[4] cooking pot, *pithos*, pit, cist, chamber grave as well as a single monumental tomb. However, while pot burials inserted into larger facilities are not included in the typology, pottery containers within pits are, such as sherd, cooking pot and *pithos*. As explained elsewhere, it seems more suitable to make a distinction between the architecture of the grave, *i.e.* its constructive technique, and the receptacle where the body is placed. Indeed, the container hardly can be considered a category of its own, to the extent that in any case burial involves placing the container either in an excavated pit or inside a cist or another kind of structure (Bouso 2015: 374). Unfortunately, most of the cists and chamber tombs are often ill-defined (with drawings and photos of only some of the graves described). The evidence from using sherds and cooking pots to house infants and children at Jerablus fits perfectly into the long tradition of burying infants within a container (Bouso 2015: 399). As for the other graves, it does not seem possible to establish a one to one relationship between the type of grave or its location (intra/extramural) and the age of the person buried. In the catalogue, the graves are presented in numerical order, regardless of location or relationship amongst them. In terms of clarity, it would have been more helpful to describe them by area, level or clustering. In addition, it would have been useful if the plan, drawing and photographs had been placed next to description. Furthermore, the graves are not listed in numerical order in the final plates.

Chapter 5, "The mortuary population", has been divided into three parts: "The human dentition" by D.A. Lunt and M.E. Watt, "The human remains" by Z. Parras and "Stable isotope analysis of human and animal remains" by C. Pickard. Regrettably, the analysis of the bioarchaeological data was conducted separately: on the one hand, the dentition (from 42 graves) and, on the other, the skeletal remains (from 44 graves). This has meant that the results do not match. Nevertheless,

4. This type of record, reserved for infants, has also been observed at other sites nearby (Bouso 2015: 391-392).

both conclude that a high proportion of very young children were buried—suggesting that probably adults were buried in graveyards around the site—and that both single and collective burial systems coexisted at the site. It appears that where the record has not been disturbed, the interments are usually found in a primary, articulated state. Although interesting, Parras's theory, that some individuals (or body parts) may have been moved to a secondary burial, seems hard to prove considering the problems related to the mortuary assemblage, especially the preservation of children's bones. Isotope analysis from eight adults, two sub-adults and seven children, together with a comparative assemblage of faunal remains are provided in the last part of the chapter. All in all, both studies highlight the tentative conclusions that are due to the poor state of the remains. Unfortunately, this fact makes it impossible to discuss changes and enhancing interpretations in burial practices situating the human remains at the forefront.

In Chapter 6, "Pottery of the Early Bronze and Uruk Periods - Summary", D. Bolger and E. Peltenburg briefly review the pottery from the graves ascribed to the EBA (Period II). The number of Uruk sherds recorded from T.302 is surprising, and Bolger raises the possibility that some of them were introduced deliberately during the construction of the tomb mound. For a detailed analysis of the pottery we must wait for the results of the study in the second volume.

The subsequent chapter (Chapter 7 "Metalwork from mortuary contexts") by G. Philip covers metal assemblages from the graves, mainly ornaments. In addition to descriptions of each item, an analysis of selected pieces with energy dispersive X-ray fluorescence (EDXRF) is provided. Chapter 8, "Metals from Early Bronze burial assemblages collected between 1911 and 1920 by D.G. Hogarth, C.L. Woolley and T.E. Lawrence in the Central Euphrates and Sajur River regions of Syria", by P. Northover and K. Prag, zooms in on 98 metal objects from nine sites. The results of analysis of the metalwork (by X-ray spectrometry) of selected items are given as well.

Many other aspects of material culture from the graves are covered in Chapter 9, under the broad umbrella of "Other objects, including personal ornaments and figurines", by K. Eremin, A. Jackson, C. McCartney *et al*. The chapter presents all of the *ca* 1300 ornaments catalogued, going from beads (1286 from 19 EBA graves), to pendants, pins (in *ca* 50% of the EBA graves), gold foil, objects of ivory, handmade and unbaked anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines, model wheels, incised bones, shell objects and ground-stone artefacts. In general terms, except for two graves and tomb T.302, the distribution of artefacts is shown to be egalitarian.

P. Croft addresses the evidentiary potential of animal bones in a funerary context, mainly from tomb T.302 in Chapter 10, "Animal remains". Again, comparison with the results from the study of the faunal remains from the rest of the site is required in order to draw conclusions about how representative they are and their meaning. Chapter 11, by S. Colledge and C. Stevens, focuses on a single set of botanical data ("The charred plant remains from Tomb 302"). They conclude that there is not enough information to ascertain a funerary offering regarding the plant materials from that particular tomb. The twelfth chapter, "Mollusca" by J. Ridout-Sharpe, looks at the collection of molluscs from graves and determines that the provenance of most of these marine shells (8) is the Mediterranean, with only one from the Red Sea or the Persian Gulf.

"Jerablus mortuary practices in their local and regional contexts", by E. Pelbenburg, is the final chapter in the volume, which includes thirteen main sections, seven of them devoted to Tomb 302. Picking up the main data outlined at the volume, this last chapter sets out to explore the grave evidence from Jerablus in respect of regional trends and connections. Although conclusions drawn from problematic dataset, especially T.302 difficult stratigraphy, the chapter nicely rounds off the volume and poses interesting questions for studying the region's diachronic funerary practices and their role in sociopolitical changes, identity and social memory during the end of the 3rd millennium and earlier 2nd millennium.[5]

Space prohibits commenting in detail on the complex and long history of the monumental T.302, given its particular location at the gate of the fort, characteristics and problems (lack of stratigraphic integrity, disturbances such as water action and mediaeval pits cut into the tomb, intrusive material, discrepancies in the number and age of people buried—18 according to dentition but 30 from osteology—and so on). As the author acknowledges, T.302 could be linked to particular beliefs and sets the stage for a discussion on the trajectory of the tomb from burial site to place of remembrance, yet multi-stage rituals resist a straightforward archaeological interpretation based on this complex grave. This is but one possibility, and other equally plausible alternative scenarios may be envisaged.

This volume is a well-presented excavation report, which extends our knowledge of funerary practices in the 3rd millennium BC. One of its main achievements of this contribution is to provide a set of new data together with multidisciplinary analyses, including a large number of illustrations and published com-

5. Some of these interpretations of funerary practices during the 3rd millennium BC in the Euphrates Valley had been presented previously in Peltenburg 2007-2008.

paranda from contemporary sites in the region; this is in spite of the badly disturbed state of most of the graves, which severely hampers any interpretation. There are a few minor errors in editing and grammar that we will not summarize here.

Through its investigation of Bronze Age funerary data, this monograph contributes to our knowledge of the development of society, the shifting political, and cultural dynamics of the period in the Middle Euphrates valley and also makes a significant contribution to questions concerning landscape in the Carchemish region. Readers must wait for the second volume of the project for a more fleshed-out picture of the grave contexts and pottery study, both important factors in the interpretation of the graves. These limitations notwithstanding, this is a most welcome contribution in the field of funerary archaeology in the Euphrates Valley, since in spite of the exceptional richness of the archaeological record, the region has been poorly published. One may stress that archaeologists must endeavour to develop more efficacious techniques for interconnecting the diversified datasets produced in the field, in order to make them searchable, and then analyse them more creatively and integrate them with the archaeological record from Mesopotamia, Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean. It is to be hoped that the contributors will continue the work initiated in this volume.

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